



February 5, 2023

The Honorable Luke Clippinger  
House Judiciary Committee  
Room 101 - House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support - House Bill 44: Correctional Services – Pregnant Incarcerated Individuals – Substance Use Disorder Assessment and Treatment

Dear Chairman Clippinger and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) and the Washington Psychiatric Society (WPS) are state medical organizations whose physician members specialize in diagnosing, treating, and preventing mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Formed more than sixty-five years ago to support the needs of psychiatrists and their patients, both organizations work to ensure available, accessible, and comprehensive quality mental health resources for all Maryland citizens; and strive through public education to dispel the stigma and discrimination of those who have a mental illness. As the district branches of the American Psychiatric Association covering the state of Maryland, MPS and WPS represent over 1000 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

MPS/WPS supports House Bill 44: Correctional Services – Pregnant Incarcerated Individuals – Substance Use Disorder Assessment and Treatment (HB 44). Pregnant incarcerated individuals should be screened for substance use disorder (SUD) because drug and alcohol use during pregnancy can have severe consequences for both the mother and the developing fetus. Substance use during pregnancy can result in adverse outcomes, including preterm labor, low birth weight, developmental delays, and congenital disabilities. Substance use can also increase the risk of miscarriage, stillbirth, and maternal mortality.

Furthermore, pregnant incarcerated individuals are a particularly vulnerable population, as they may have limited access to prenatal care and may be at increased risk of substance use due to stressors related to incarceration. Identifying and addressing SUD in pregnant incarcerated individuals can help to mitigate the adverse outcomes associated with substance use during pregnancy and improve health outcomes for both the mother and the baby. In addition, providing SUD treatment to pregnant incarcerated individuals can also improve outcomes for their children beyond birth. Infants born to mothers who have received treatment for SUD are less likely to experience neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) and have better developmental outcomes.

Overall, screening for SUD in pregnant incarcerated individuals is essential in promoting the health and well-being of both the mother and the baby. It can help to identify and address SUD



early, improve access to appropriate care, and ultimately improve health outcomes for this vulnerable population. For all those reasons, MPS/WPS asks this committee for a favorable report on HB 44. If you have any questions with regard to this testimony, please feel free to contact Thomas Tompsett Jr. at [tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com](mailto:tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com).

Respectfully submitted,  
The Joint Legislative Action Committee  
of the Maryland Psychiatric Society and the Washington Psychiatric Society